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Remembrance Days in European Union – between oblivion, national manifestations and an European narrative?¹

Introduction

In reaction to the award of the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize to the EU, both the president of the European Commission and the president of the European Council emphasized the “unique effort by ever more European states to overcome [past] war and divisions” as one of the main achievements of the EU². The EU, according to Barroso and van Rompuy, has managed to unite “around values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights”³. The acts of mass murder in 20th-century Europe with the Holocaust as its central catastrophe were one of the major points of reference for the founding fathers of the European Union⁴. Thus, the commemoration of the Holocaust as one of the darkest part of the common past experience of all European nations still plays an important role in contemporary Europe. History, as an old proverb says, likes to repeat itself. The Polish-British sociologist Zygmunt Bauman puts the need to remember the Holocaust the following way:

(...) the gnawing suspicion that the Holocaust could be more than an aberration, more than a deviation from an otherwise straight path of progress, more than a cancerous growth on the otherwise healthy body of the civilized society; that, in short, the Holocaust was not an antithesis of modern civilization and everything it stands for. We suspect that the Holocaust could merely have uncovered another face of the same modern society whose other, more familiar, face we so admire⁵.

This presumption adds a second dimension to the need of Holocaust and genocide remembrance in contemporary Europe. And it justifies the imperative to do so throughout all countries with the same – or at least similar – intensity. It makes remembrance an issue with an intrinsic meaning for a common, peaceful and prosperous future. However, European

¹ The project was funded by the National Science Centre on the allocation decision DEC-2013/08/M/HS6/00041.

² Joint statement of José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, and Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council on the award of the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize to the EU, retrieved from www.europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-12-779_en.htm, [access: 5.02.2015].

³ As above.

⁴ On the official website of the European Union, it says: „The European Union is set up with the aim of ending the frequent and bloody wars between neighbours, which culminated in the Second World War”, www.europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/history_en, [access: 23.10.2016].

⁵ Z. Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, New York 1989, p. 7.

commemoration initiatives of all kind must and will always encompass room for national specifics and the question remains, in how far the contents of commemoration activities should and can be similar? In how far for example, an official German commemoration speech or Holocaust remembrance ceremony can be similar to a Polish one, taking into account the status of Germany as the successor country of the Third Reich and Poland as an occupied country where all major death camps had been operated by the Nazi authorities? And should they happen on the same day (which might be meaningful for one country, but for another not), should the subject of commemoration be clear-cut from above and uniform?

Already 15 years ago, the then Prime Minister of Sweden, Göran Persson, convoked the first Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust⁶ in Stockholm with representatives of 16 nations to define a common framework for commemorating and teaching the Holocaust⁷. As the renowned collective memory researcher Aleida Assmann observed, it was then agreed that the mass murder of European Jewry was to become a central common memory and “that this memory should inform the values of European civil society and serve as a reminder of the obligation to protect the rights of minorities⁸”. The passing of the last eyewitnesses in the last years and decades has paradoxically been accompanied by an “increasing urgency for many political actors” with respect to institutionalized remembrance ceremonies and activities, as Aline Sierp found⁹.

Also scholars have emphasized the central meaning of the Holocaust in European collective memory. Claus Leggewie considers the Holocaust in some sense to be the negative founding myth of Europe and the first and central of seven circles of European memory. At the same time, due to the diversity of European memory, he is convinced of the impossibility to “regulate” it by strict official acts of state or commemorative rituals¹⁰. Similarly, for Carlos Closa the Holocaust is one of three layers of memory in the EU along with foundational myths and the broader perceived memory on totalitarian crimes¹¹. Given the diametrically different situations of the nation states in Europe in the years 1939-1945, the doubt about the sheer practicability of centralized commemoration events is unquestionably a serious one. Instead of trying to establish a possibly uniform common narrative of the past, it might be more realistic and much more meaningful to draw more general conclusions from the past trauma in order to turn them into positive values for the future, such as a coherent

⁶ The Stockholm Declaration on the Holocaust, which was adopted on this occasion, has become one of the milestones in the international Holocaust remembrance process. It can be retrieved in different languages under www.holocaustremembrance.com/about-us/stockholm-declaration [access: 2.06.2015].

⁷ The consequence of this Forum was the creation of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research (later changed to The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) - an intergovernmental institution, which brings together political and social leaders in order to foster the education, commemoration and research on the Holocaust, both on a national and international level. Official website: www.holocaustremembrance.com/ [access: 2.06.2015].

⁸ A. Assmann, *Europe: A Community of Memory?*, Twentieth Annual Lecture of the GHI, November 16, 2006, “GHI Bulletin” 2007, no. 40 (Spring), p. 13.

⁹ A. Sierp, *History, Memory and Trans-European Identity. Unifying Divisions*, Routledge/New York 2014, p. 3.

¹⁰ C. Leggewie, *Seven Circles of European Memory*, in: Eurozine, 2010.

¹¹ C. Closa, presentation entitled *EU Politics of Memory*, International Workshop EU Politics of Memory, Florence, June 19-20, 2015 unpublished materials

immigration, anti-discrimination and human rights policy. Apart from the past-related aim to commemorate the victims, EU documents about memorial days related to the Holocaust and other acts of genocide and ethnic cleansing therefore frequently refer to the meaning of those crimes for the future¹². The current need for a practicable *modus operandi* for common commemoration days is furthermore closely linked to the change of the political landscape in Europe after 1989, as Klas-Göran Karlsson writes:

After the ending of the Cold War, there was a need to celebrate the new European unity by attributing the moral zero point to the past. In this context, the Holocaust became a useful concept to tie the absolute evil of history together with a good, united Europe of the future. [...] Thus, the Holocaust was thought to be an important aspect in the development of a historical consciousness, which could promote a further, deepened integration in Europe, based on a community of historical values¹³.

In line with this thought, C.F. Stokholm Banke distinguishes 4 characteristic periods of the development of Holocaust memory¹⁴: the years of confrontation (1945-46), the years of interpretation (1950s), followed by a period of documentation and justice (early 1960s after the Eichmann trial – 1990s), and finally the era of remembrance (since 1989). It should however be remembered, that due to the political developments, the countries of the former Soviet bloc, such as Poland, underwent a slightly different process of coming to terms with the past.

Since 1989, the Holocaust as subject of collective memory and commemoration has become an issue of indisputable political importance for European and non-European policy makers. A. Assmann quoting Tony Judt¹⁵ even argues that activities in the field of Holocaust remembrance, among them the celebration of the International Holocaust Remembrance Day each year on January 27, has become a “entrance ticket” for candidate countries to the European Union¹⁶. In this respect, national memory discourses are more and more influenced by the basic ideas, guidelines and tendencies, which are part of the European integration process, as Aline Sierp observes in her work *Memory and Trans-European Identity*¹⁷.

National and supranational remembrance days, which are imposed by administrative decrees and turned into practice by official and unofficial actors (such as public authorities, schools, NGO's or even individuals), are part of our contemporary landscape of memory – they are specific “places of memory.” Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire* (places of memory), which constitutes the fundament of the reflections of this article, considers

¹² See the official documents regarding the three remembrance days, which are recalled in this article.

¹³ K.-G. Karlsson, *The Holocaust as a Problem of Historical Culture*, in: *Echoes of the Holocaust*, ed. K.G. Karlsson/U.Zander, Lund 2003, p. 18–19.

¹⁴ C. F. Stokholm Banke, presentation entitled *The Holocaust and EU Politics of Memory*, International Workshop EU Politics of Memory, Florence, June 19-20, 2015 unpublished materials. However, Banke's classification is limited on observations of Western European history.

¹⁵ T. Judt, *A House of Dead. An Essay on the European Memory*, in: idem, *Postwar. A History of Europe Since 1945*, London 2006, p. 803–31.

¹⁶ A. Assmann after Tony Judt, *Ku europejskiej kulturze pamięci?* (p. 274-307), in: *Między historią a pamięcią. Antologia*, Warszawa 2013, p. 285.

¹⁷ Above mentioned.

not only physical places (including monuments, cemeteries, but also archives, libraries and museums), but also symbolic “places” – therefore also anniversary days and commemoration ceremonies, in as much they are connected to a specific, meaningful historical event, figure or narrative¹⁸. The nature of official memorial days is remarkable with regards to at least two points: they are imposed from above and therefore, as we argue, introduced “artificially” into the life of society, whereas the respective commemoration subjects are not always important, clear or meaningful to all citizens. Furthermore, their subject is a matter of negotiation between all actors involved. The function of remembrance days includes both the adherence of memory of past events and a perspective for the future. Remembrance days therefore have political importance. While individual memory is spontaneous and unreliable, the rituals and symbols involved in official celebrations on nation - or Europe-wide remembrance days secure a sense of community, loyalty and group identity. Public commemorations fulfil hence the function of a “carrier for cultural and political memory”¹⁹. The function of official remembrance days include furthermore the creation of a public accessible frame for the organized return of the past, the provision of a stage of group representations and the possibility to combine competing interests (stage for negotiation of meanings).²⁰

As a benchmark, the authors have chosen three memorial days connected to the traumatic experience of World War II, which have been introduced by EU bodies in the last few years: the European Holocaust Memorial Day (27 January), the European Day of the Righteous (6 March) and the European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism (23 August). In the following, these three dates will be portrayed, analyzed and compared based on actual events organized in Poland, and on a smaller scale also in France and Germany.²¹ The chosen initiatives are an example of the way, how history is nowadays used to create a common identity based on common values and ideas. For the purpose of this article, we agree with the distinction of Aline Sierp between cultural memory (bottom-up) and political memory (top-down)²², where the latter is an intentionally used instrument of political institutions to construct meanings, a feeling of community and solidarity. While decisions of the EU parliament on the introduction of a Holocaust Memorial Day are an example of a top-down political memory initiative, the existence of local initiatives and projects in the member states by non-governmental organizations without central guidelines would indicate an authentic need of local society to construct, celebrate and keep alive cultural memory. As the European Parliament holds no legislative power

¹⁸ See: K. Kowalski, *O istocie dziedzictwa europejskiego - rozważania*, Kraków 2014, p. 51.

¹⁹ Sierp, *History*, p. 20.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 20 (cited after: Binder, B. Jahrestag. In J. Ruchatz & N. Pethes, *Lexikon Gedächtnis und Erinnerung*, Reinbek 2001)

²¹ The focus of the analysis is for practical reasons Poland – in the other two countries, the number of events reported in the press and accessible via internet is too small. Two attempts to explain this phenomenon might be the general high level of interest for topics linked to World War II in Poland as well as the fact, that the physical remainders of a large number of German Nazi concentration camps are located within the border of the Third Polish Republic (and therefore ceremonies with international guests and press attendance are organized there).

²² *Ibidem*, p. 14.

in questions of creating collective memory, all analyzed initiatives are solely *soft law*. It is therefore up to the EU member states to implement the decisions of the Parliament into the national legislation.

Specifics of the analyzed countries regarding the Holocaust memory

The following analysis of commemoration celebrations bases on three neighbouring countries in the heart of Europe: Germany, France and Poland, with the focus on the latter. All three belong to the most densely populated EU member states with a central role in EU policy making. Concerning the Holocaust, both the historical situation and contemporary memory narratives are, however, diametrically different. The moral responsibility of the Federal Republic of Germany as the successor state of the Third Reich constitutes for obvious reasons a unique, distinctive feature. France with its century-long history of conflicts and wars with its Western neighbor and the successful reconciliation process with the Federal Republic of Germany after World War II has been for many years shaped by a narrative of victimhood. Just in the last 20 years, painful questions concerning collaboration and guilt of French gentiles have been raised. Poland in contrast both had the largest pre-war Jewish population and an exceptionally high loss during the Holocaust (over 90% of Polish Jews were murdered). As a result of the communist regime in post-war Poland, the Iron Curtain and the lack of exchange of information and scholars between the Soviet and Western zones of influence, the war narrative in Poland was for a long time solely concentrated on Polish martyrdom, excluding the exceptional tragedy of the European Jews. The former concentration camp site Auschwitz became a place of honoring Polish martyrdom and losses under German occupation²³ and it required a series of emotional debates including disputes on the highest political level between Poland, Israel and the United States in order to develop a more objective, multi-leveled picture.

However with respect to memory formation after 1945, all three countries of the sample have been strongly affected by the new post-war political situation. The Cold War and Poland's affiliation to the Eastern bloc shaped its memory of the war, which considered the Jewish Holocaust victims just as one of many nations who were oppressed by the German fascist system and depicted all nations of the Eastern bloc as resistance heroes. Also France had a strong 'resister' memory in the first post-war decades. It was not until the 1980's, when both in France and Poland first debates about the 'dark sides' of the own history during WWII emerged. Undoubtedly, especially for Poland Claude Lanzmann's film *Shoah*

²³ In fact, the original camp Auschwitz I was initially build for Polish political prisoners in 1940 and held a majority of Polish prisoners almost throughout the entire existence of the camp. Auschwitz-Birkenau however was the main site of mass murder of European Jews with more than a million victims. For more details on the discussion about the symbolic meaning of Auschwitz, see e. g. S. Krajewski, *Poland and the Jews. Reflections of a Polish Polish Jew*, Krakow, 2005; W. T. Bartoszewski, *The convent at Auschwitz*, New York 1990; G. Zubrzycki, *The Crosses of Auschwitz*, Chicago/London 2006.

(1986) and Jan Tomasz Gross' books *Neighbors*²⁴ and *Fear*²⁵ have played an important role in this process.

Case Studies

a. European/International Holocaust Memorial Day

Many years prior to the official introduction of 27 January as an international Holocaust remembrance day, a number of countries had introduced that date on a national level. Two examples are France and Germany, who celebrate the 27 January accordingly since 1993 and 1996.²⁶ The selected date has an important symbolical meaning, as on January 27, 1945 Soviet troops liberated the Auschwitz concentration camp complex and Auschwitz has become a world-wide known symbol of the Holocaust.

A significant change in the direction of a unification in this matter was the Recommendation Rec(2001)15 on history teaching in twenty-first-century Europe²⁷ adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 31 October 2001 at the 771st meeting of the Ministers' Deputies. In this document, the Council of Europe stressed out the need for "implementing and monitoring implementation of the education ministers' decision²⁸ to designate a day in schools, chosen in the light of each country's history, for Holocaust remembrance and for the prevention of crimes against humanity."²⁹ At least two specific aspects are worth mentioning here. Firstly, the Council of Europe is the first international institution which proposed to combine commemorative practices with teaching about the Holocaust with the aim of preventing the "recurrence or denial of the devastating events that have marked this century, namely the Holocaust, genocides and other crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing and the massive violations of human rights and of the fundamental values to which the Council of Europe is particularly committed"³⁰. Secondly, this initiative was a combination of both international and national dimensions that specific Memorial Day, i.e. the member states were invited to choose a date which referred to national events during World War II. Although the Memorial Day is designed to be introduced in

²⁴ J. T. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*, Princeton 2001. The book explores the massacre of the Jewish inhabitants of the eastern Polish village Jedwabne in July 1941 and indicates the Polish neighbours instead of the German occupiers as the perpetrators of the murder.

²⁵ J. T. Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz: An Essay in Historical Interpretation*, Princeton 2006. This publication is dedicated to anti-Jewish violence in post-war Poland, with a particular focus on the Kielce pogrom in 1946.

²⁶ In Germany, this date was introduced as "Remembrance Day for the victims of National Socialism" and aimed at the commemoration of all victims of the Nazi regime. It was first celebrated in 1996 and bases on a decree of the then president of the Federal Republic of Germany, Roman Herzog. In France this day was introduced in 3 years earlier.

²⁷ Recommendation Rec(2001)15 on history teaching in twenty-first-century Europe, [www.wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=Rec\(2001\)15&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=9999CC&BackColorIntranet=FFB-B55&BackColorLogged=FFAC75](http://www.wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=Rec(2001)15&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=9999CC&BackColorIntranet=FFB-B55&BackColorLogged=FFAC75) [access: 2.06.2015].

²⁸ The 20th Session of the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education on the project "Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the twentieth century" (Cracow, Poland, 2000).

²⁹ See the Council of Europe website, www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/remembrance/archives/dayRemem_en.asp [access: 2.06.2015].

³⁰ Recommendation Rec(2001)15 on history teaching in twenty-first-century Europe, [www.wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=Rec\(2001\)15&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=9999CC&BackColorIntranet=FFB-B55&BackColorLogged=FFAC75](http://www.wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=Rec(2001)15&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=9999CC&BackColorIntranet=FFB-B55&BackColorLogged=FFAC75), [access: 2.06.2015].

all member states of the Council of Europe, each member state has a certain autonomy in choosing the date clearly corresponding with its own national history.³¹ This project might be therefore seen as a more open and democratic attempt, in which the Council of Europe tries to encourage the member states to celebrate and commemorate one special day.

The second step in the process of creating a pan-European day of Holocaust remembrance was an initiative of the EU Parliament. On 27 January 2005, the EP adopted the text of a resolution on remembrance of the Holocaust, antisemitism and racism³². Considering that some of the EU member states had already established the 27 January as Holocaust Memorial Day (i.e. Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy³³), it encourages to set up an official commemoration day on that date. As a result, January 27 was marked as official Holocaust Memorial Day across the whole EU. Auschwitz – and remarkably only this camp is listed in the text of the resolution – is considered a warning for future generation in order to prevent a repetition of history.

However, not only the European Union marked January 27 as Holocaust Memorial Day. On 1 November, 2005 the General Assembly of the United Nations decided to designate 27 January as an annual International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust. Another important aspect of this initiative was to urge the UN member states to develop, support and promote educational initiatives in order to commemorate but moreover to prevent genocide from happening again³⁴ (exact the same goals as the Council of Europe). The Assembly pointed out the rejection of Holocaust denial in terms of historical event, condemning any manifestations of intolerance based on ethnic origin or religious belief as well as requesting the then General Secretary Kofi Annan to establish an outreach program on the “Holocaust and the United Nations³⁵”.

If it comes to Germany, the 27th January has become a fixed point in the national memory calendar with regards to World War II. The most remarkable event each year, which enjoys large TV and press coverage, is the official ceremony in the German parliament. Every year, the deputies hold a ceremony encompassing speeches by officials, a minute of silence in honor of the victims and a lecture by an invited contemporary witness. In his official speech on January 27, 2015, President Joachim Gauck combined both a distinct national aspect and a vision of Holocaust commemoration as a global challenge. The sentence “There is no German identity without Auschwitz”³⁶ was repeated in newspaper and TV covera-

³¹ Following the CoE recommendation, a series of member states established such a memorial day. France and Germany stayed with January 27 as before, Poland decided on April 19 as Day of Remembrance for the Victims of the Holocaust and Prevention of Crimes against Humanity. The date is the anniversary of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

³² European Parliament Resolution on remembrance of the Holocaust, anti-semitism and racism, www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2005-0018+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN, [access: 31.05.2015].

³³ Rebecca Clifford, Commemorating Holocaust in Europe, www.blog.oup.com/2014/01/commemorating-the-holocaust-in-europe/, [access: 31.05.2015].

³⁴ Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on the Holocaust Remembrance (A/RES/60/7, 1 November 2005), www.un.org/en/holocaustremembrance/docs/res607.shtml, [access: 2.06.2015].

³⁵ www.un.org/en/holocaustremembrance/index.shtml, [access: 2.06.2015].

³⁶ Official speech, text in English available under www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Reden/2015/01/150127-Gedenken-Holocaust-englisch.pdf?__blob=publicationFile, [access: 21.05.2015]; Gauck went on by saying: “Remembering the Holocaust remains a matter for every citizen of Germany. It is part and parcel of our country’s history.”

ge all over the country the day after. In his lecture, Gauck recalled other cases of genocide in the second half of the 20th century and poses the universal question: “Are we capable of preventing mass murder from happening in the first place, and are we willing to do so? To what extent are we able to end or punish such crimes?”³⁷ Chancellor Angela Merkel spoke on the eve of the Remembrance Day about an “everlasting responsibility” of the German nation and evoked the warning function of Auschwitz in the context of rising negative attitudes towards immigrants in Germany and elsewhere³⁸. Apart from official speeches, a significant number of local remembrance ceremonies, film screenings and debates were organized all over the country. In 2016, the celebration was also mainly focused on the official ceremony in the German Parliament. That year, the main topic was the commemoration of forced labour in national socialist Germany and occupied Europe. Norbert Lammert, president of the Bundestag, emphasized the meaning of the Holocaust for Germany and Europe in face of the contemporary humanitarian challenges³⁹.

French President Francois Hollande gave an official speech at the Mémorial de la Shoah in Paris on 27 January 2015. Although he mainly concentrated on France and the deteriorating situation of French Jews in the last few years, his discourse also contained more universal remarks:

The Mémorial is a place of vigilance and prudence, where the visitors learns that commemoration means engagement – engagement against hate of all type. The Mémorial commemorates the Holocaust, but also all other genocides, the 20th anniversary of the Tutsi genocide in Ruanda and in this year it will also celebrate the anniversary of the Armenian genocide⁴⁰.

He then went on by calling the 27th January an “universal event, which does not only concern the Jews, but the entire world.”⁴¹ However, the focus of the speech evolved around the historical and contemporary situation of Jews in France and the responsibility of the French nation to commemorate and counteract hatred and discrimination against minorities. A common point, which links the French speech with the German, was Hollande’s finishing remark: “The commemoration of crimes against humanity does not belong to anybody – it is our common heritage.” In 2016, the main ceremony at the Mémorial de la Shoah was attended by the French prime minister Manuel Valls, who paid attention to contemporary anti-Semitism in France⁴² and the continuous need for society nowadays to resist

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

³⁸ “Auschwitz fordert uns täglich heraus”, www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/2015-01/merkel-auschwitz-befreiung-gedenkfeier, [access: 05.06.2015].

³⁹ Speech of German President of the Bundestag Norbert Lammert on 27 January 2016, full text in German language available under: www.bundestag.de/parlament/praesidium/reden/2016/001/403846, [access: 24.10.2016].

⁴⁰ Text of the official speech of president Francois Hollande at the Mémorial de la Shoah in Paris, 27 January, 2015. Retrieved from: www.elysee.fr/chronologie/#e8432,2015-01-27,c-r-monie-au-m-morial-de-la-shoah, [access: 31.05.2015]. Own translation.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

⁴² “Because we haven’t finished off with the antisemitism! It is still there, virulent, poisonous, criminal. It still kills French Jews just because they are Jews.” – full text of the speech of French prime minister Manuel Valls at the Mémorial de la Shoah in Paris, 27 January 2016, available in French language under: www.gouvernement.fr/sites/default/files/document/document/2016/01/20160127_discours_de_manuel_valls_premier_ministre_-_memorial_de_la_shoah.pdf, [access: 24.10.2016].

against totalitarian ideologies of all kind. In this respect, he combined the national narrative of France, remarks about French collaboration with the Nazis⁴³ and the need to commemorate the Holocaust victims with an universal message of non-discrimination, struggle for freedom and democracy.

The Polish then head of state Bronisław Komorowski gave his official speech on the occasion of the official ceremony of the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the German Nazi Concentration Camp Auschwitz-Birkenau in Oświęcim on 27 January, 2015. His address, which revolved around two main themes, combines both the universal aspect of the Holocaust and national remarks. One was the historical aspect of Auschwitz as a place where “our [European – LB, KS] civilization has collapsed” and as a site of outrageous and systematic contempt for human dignity. The second main issue tackled was the memory of the Holocaust which oppressors wanted to destroy and which the people of today have the duty to maintain. He claimed: “As special witnesses of this memory are both the still living survivors and Polish society as such, as the Holocaust happened mostly on Polish occupied territory”. The second part of the president’s address focused on the meaning of the memory of Auschwitz in our contemporary world: he emphasized the need for memory should encompass suffering and the Holocaust in the first place, but also the Righteous as a positive example. This memory, as he said, was “a necessity for defending freedom, solidarity, tolerance and respecting human rights and civil freedoms”. With regards to Polish and Christian collective memory of Auschwitz, Komorowski recalled saint Maximilian Kolbe and the teaching of Pope John Paul II, who understood the need to teach about Auschwitz as a necessary act of “clearing collective social conscience”.⁴⁴

It seems to be very important that Komorowski referred to universal values and the Righteous, who in a certain respect carried those values. Nevertheless, they were not present in Auschwitz themselves. The duty to remember and to admire those who stood up to the challenge of rescuing Jews during the Holocaust is therefore presented as a duty of every European citizen.

One year later the newly elected president Andrzej Duda emphasized in his speech the individual aspect of suffering. He also strongly underlined the importance of Auschwitz as “sign and warning” and result of a situation where political power is deprived, social life is full of hatred and international institutions don’t react on time. In order to ensure that such a tragedy will never happen again, Duda suggested to put stress on enforcing international laws but also on the fostering education. In comparison to the previous year, there were much more links to the national history of Poland. The speech mentioned several national heroes mentioned (i.e. Jan Karski and Witold Pilecki) as well as activities of the Polish Underground State. Auschwitz was mentioned as a place of suffering of Jews, but also Poles.

⁴³ *Op. cit.*, “Yes, there were Frenchmen who denounced other Frenchmen, just because they were Jews”.

⁴⁴ Text of the official speech of president Bronisław Komorowski on 27 January 2015 at the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, available in Polish under: www.prezydent.pl/aktualnosci/wypowiedzi-prezydenta/wystapienia/art,217,wystapienie-prezydenta-na-uroczystosci-w-70-rocznice-wyzwolenia-kl-auschwitz-birkenau.html, [access: 2.06.2015].

Another interesting thing was to put the duty of remembrance and dissemination of the historical truth on Poland and Israel. There was no reference to Germany as another actor who also should share this duty⁴⁵. This short speech clearly shows the national and domestic shift after the elections in Poland and its influence on the perception of the Holocaust Memorial Day.

On this day, all three countries held official ceremonies, which were attended by the respective heads of states and prime ministers. In Poland, the main event was the solemn ceremony on the occasion of the 70. anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz with media coverage all over the world. However, the celebrations were in the large majority of cases official and state-organized, the number of bottom-up initiatives was rather low. One example is the initiative “memory flame” launched by the Shoah Foundation, which encouraged society in the media to lit a candle at 6pm that day in order to commemorate all Holocaust victims. People also shared their participation in the virtual sphere on a special Facebook profile. This is an example of how technological developments influence memory practices within contemporary societies. Official ceremonies took also place in Warsaw at the monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Fighters.

In Germany, the ceremonies mainly concentrated in Berlin. Chancellor Merkel attended a ceremony organized by the International Auschwitz Committee, President Gauck gave a speech in the German Parliament the day after. An example for a local initiative is the project by the city council of Zwiefalten in Southern Germany and the local Centre for Psychiatry, who set their focus on the commemoration of thousands of mentally ill victims of the Nazi regime.⁴⁶ Apart from a few similar initiatives, German media concentrated on the central ceremonies as well as on survivor stories and documentary films about Auschwitz. A similar concentration of the media on the official celebration at the Memorial de la Shoah could be observed in France.

b. European Day of the Righteous.

In May 2012, the European Parliament decided upon the establishment of an annual European Day of the Righteous, which is celebrated on 6 March. This Remembrance Day dates back to an initiative of the Italian NGO GARIWO with international outreach. The Committee for the Gardens of the Righteous Worldwide was created in Milan/Italy in 1999 with the aim to raise awareness and interest in the topic of the Righteous by creating places of remembrance in areas, where mass extermination or genocide happened, by planting small gardens all over the world with trees representing the Righteous. This idea

⁴⁵ Text of official speech of president Andrzej Duda on 27 January 2016, available in Polish under: www.prezydent.pl/aktualnosci/wypowiedzi-prezydenta-rp/wystapienia/art,27,wystapienie-na-obchodach-71-rocznicy-wyzwolenia-kl-auschwitz-birke-nau.html#drukuj, [access 17.10.2016].

⁴⁶ See: www.zwiefalten.de/Lde_DE/Startseite/Gemeinde/Gedenkttag+am+27_01_2015.html, [access: 03.06.2015].

directly followed the example of the Garden of Righteous at the Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem.⁴⁷

The European Parliament adopted the proposal of GARIWO, who since March 2011 collected signatures under a respective public appeal, and "recalling the great moral significance of the Garden of the Righteous in Jerusalem, the institutions that have honoured people who saved lives during all genocides and mass murders and all those who preserved human dignity during Nazism and Communist totalitarianism"⁴⁸ decided to establish a European Day of the Righteous⁴⁹. The European Day of the Righteous aims to honor all individuals, who in the face of a genocide or totalitarian system have stood up for the protection of human dignity, aided victims or defended the truth despite official prohibitions. The definition of "Righteous" adopted in this initiative is much broader than the concept regarding the medal Righteous among the Nations established by Yad Vashem. The latter is awarded to non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust, while the new European commemoration day wants to honor all "those who challenged crimes against humanity and totalitarianism with individual responsibility".⁵⁰ According to the official declaration of the European Parliament of 10 May 2012 on the support for the establishment of a European Day of Remembrance for the Righteous, apart from honoring the Righteous, the education of the young generation is one of the major aims of the initiative⁵¹. In this respect, the focus of the European Day of the Righteous is rather placed on general human values and attitudes than on a specific case, date or group of victims/aid providers.

The celebration of March 6th as the European Day of Righteous takes different forms in Poland, mostly official meetings, exhibitions, debates and discussion. One part of the initiatives focus strictly on honoring Polish Righteous, however there are also initiatives going beyond the national context, as the Polish Garden of the Righteous, which honors categories of people of different nationalities. During the events, one could observe the presence of official functionaries and support from the major national institutions such as the Polish Ministries of Foreign Affairs or Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. This proves the top-level importance of the ceremonies for Polish state authorities.

2013 saw a set of events mainly in the cities of Łódź and Białystok – starting from the Honorary Committee for the Celebration of the European Day of Righteous among the Nations (Komitet Honorowy Europejskiego Dnia Pamięci) with former Prime Minister

⁴⁷ www.en.gariwo.net/about-us-4969.html, [access on 21.05.2015].

⁴⁸ Official Declaration in Support of the establishment of a European Day of Remembrance for the Righteous, text in English language available under: www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2012-0205+0+DOC+X-ML+V0//EN, [access: 17.01.2015].

⁴⁹ The date is not random, since March 6th is the death anniversary of the former president of the Righteous Commission at Yad Vashem, Moshe Bejski, who had passed away in 2007.

⁵⁰ Official Declaration in Support of the establishment of a European Day of Remembrance for the Righteous, text in English language available under: www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2012-0205+0+DOC+X-ML+V0//EN, [access: 17.01.2015].

⁵¹ Quote from the Declaration: „whereas the remembrance of good is essential to the process of European integration because it teaches younger generations that everyone can always choose to help other human beings and defend human dignity, and that public institutions have a duty to highlight the example set by people who managed to protect those persecuted out of hate;”, *ibidem*, [access: 21.05.2015]

Tadeusz Mazowiecki as chairperson and the decision to establish the Polish Garden of the Righteous⁵². The leading institution was History Meeting House in Warsaw⁵³, which closely cooperated with GARIWO.

One of the events was the opening of the exhibition “Jan Karski. Man of Freedom” in headquarter of the Polish Parliament, which dealt with the biography of Jan Karski⁵⁴. Additionally in Łódź there were two screenings of movies based on biographies of Poles who fought against totalitarian regimes⁵⁵ and workshops for families with children on Righteous and heroes.

In 2014, the POLIN Museum in cooperation with the Polish Ministry of Foreign affairs inaugurated the exhibition „Under the risk of life –Poles rescuing Jews during the Holocaust”. The exhibition shows the context of occupied Poland, biographies of Polish Righteous but also the personal stories of the rescued Jews. Remarkably, the narrative includes also Poles as oppressors, who denounced the Jews to the Gestapo⁵⁶. In this respect, also dark sides of Polish-Jewish relations are presented and the exhibition goes beyond a sole narrative of Poland as a nation of heroes and victims. The materials for the exhibition mainly based on the project “Polish Righteous - Bringing Memory Back” (2007-2013). During this project, over 400 interviews were collected. The exhibition was prepared in English mainly for the foreign visitors - because the intention was to show it in Polish consulates and embassies all over the world⁵⁷.

Another major initiative in 2014 was the official establishment of the first Garden of the Righteous in Poland, which took place in early June in Warsaw. The Garden is located in the Wola district, on the territory of the former Jewish ghetto during World War II. The Garden in Poland - in contrary to Yad Vashem, but in line with the idea of GARIWO - will present only a selection of names and biographies of Righteous. The aim is to focus on the heroic attitudes and deeds of the honored individuals in order to create a positive role model for future generations. According to an official publication, the founding committee aims to avoid a competition between “our” (Polish) Righteous and “others” from abroad.⁵⁸ Along with this objective, 3 categories of people are to be honored in the Polish Garden: people, who rescued other during periods of ethnic cleansing and genocides and who informed the world about those tragedies, those who witnessed discrimination and stood up in

⁵² In February 2014 the Committee changed name to Committee of Righteous Garden in Warsaw (Komitet Ogrodu Sprawiedliwych w Warszawie).

⁵³ www.dsh.waw.pl/en, [access: 17.10.2016].

⁵⁴ The author of this exhibition was Joanna Podolska - journalist and director of the Marek Edelman Dialogue Centre in Łódź and it was organized by the Centre, State Museum in Łódź, National Digital Archive. The patron of this exhibition was the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and sponsor was the Ernst & Young Company. www.sejm.gov.pl/sejm7.nsf/komunikat.xsp?documentId=7E478B52C8283A9AC1257B26004644D2, [access: 21.05.2015].

⁵⁵ Jacek Kuroń, Jan Nowak Jeziorański, Władysław Bartoszewski and rev. Jan Zieja

culture.pl/pl/wydarzenie/europejski-dzien-pamieci-o-sprawiedliwych, [access: 21.05.2015].

⁵⁷ www.msz.gov.pl/pl/aktualnosci/wiadomosci/europejski_dzien_pamieci_o_sprawiedliwych, [access: 21.05.2015].

⁵⁸ www.sprawiedliwi.dsh.waw.pl/public/docgalleries/BroszuraSprawiedliwi2015_1431420095/Sprawiedliwibroszura2015.pdf, p. 9-10.

public for the truth and freedom and finally those, who stood up for human dignity under extreme circumstances (such as concentration camps)⁵⁹.

In 2015, in an official ceremony in the Museum of History of Polish Jews in Warsaw three new candidates were honored in the Polish Garden for Righteous: Petro Hryhorenko, Nelson Mandela and Hasan Mazhar⁶⁰. The first months of 2015 also witnessed a nation-wide debate about memory and commemoration of the Righteous in Poland, especially in the context of the new local Museum of the Righteous in the southeastern Polish town of Markowa, which finally was inaugurated in March 2016⁶¹ and the idea of two monuments dedicated to the Righteous in Warsaw⁶².

Worth discussing is also the speech of president Duda in Markowa during the solemn inauguration of the museum, as it shows the narrative line with regards to the Polish Righteous, which was chosen by the new Polish government after the parliamentary elections in 2015⁶³. In his speech, President Duda claimed that only Poland had the death penalty for helping Jews, which historically is not true⁶⁴. He also referred to the peaceful Polish-Jewish coexistence for almost thousand years and emphasized World War II as a breakoff point of this relation. Furthermore, he called the new museum as place of "brotherhood, mercy and community" and claimed this museum had to be created to ensure historical justice towards those who rescued. One of the highlights of the speech was the claim that anybody who hates or disseminates hatred or antisemitism disregards the memory of the Ulma family and other Poles, who sacrificed their own security and lives for dignity, justice and respect.

On March 6th, 2016, in ceremony at the Museum of History of Polish Jews, 3 more people were awarded title and place in the Polish Garden of Righteous: Władysław Bartoszewski, Witold Pilecki and reverent Jan Zieja⁶⁵. All of them were related to the Polish Underground during World War II. The same year, the Marek Edelman Centre for Dialogue

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 24; the first honored individuals were the former leader of the Warsaw ghetto uprising Marek Edelman, the aid provider Magdalena Grodzka-Gużkowska, the courier of the Polish government in exile during World War II Jan Karski, the Italian missionary and informer about the Rwanda genocide Antonia Locatelli, the Polish anti-communist activist and first democratic prime minister after 1989 Tadeusz Mazowiecki and the Russian opposition journalist Anna Politkovskaya.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, biographies of those people, p. 54-65.

⁶¹ The museum is financed by the Marshal of the Podkarpackie voivodship and the Polish Ministry of Culture and is dedicated to the memory of local Poles, who helped and rescued Jews during the Holocaust. The exhibition scenario bases on materials gathered by the Polish Institute for National Memory and is entirely concentrated on local Polish aid providers (not necessarily honoured by Yad Vashem).

⁶² The debate evolves about two separate monuments in honour of the Righteous among the nations – one by the Warsaw city council in the area of the former ghetto and another in front of the new POLIN Museum next to the monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Heroes (proposed by the International Jewish Committee for the Erection of a Monument of Gratitude). In the course of a tender, a project prepared by two Austrian artists (Eduard Freudmann and Gabu Heindl) won. It included a monument-forest with 10 000 trees symbolizing an unknown number of rescued Jews. However, the project was subsequently rejected by the sponsor and initiator of the monument Mr Zygmunt Rolat. Until now (July 2016), the issues has not been resolved. See: „Tygodnik Powszechny”, no 11(3479), 13 March 2016, p.9.

⁶³ The text of official speech of president Andrzej Duda: www.prezydent.pl/aktualnosci/wypowiedzi-prezydenta-rp/wystapienia/art,33,wystapienie-na-uroczystosci-otwarcia-muzeum-polakow-ratujacych-zydow-im-rodziny-ulmow-w-markowej.-html#drukuj, [access: 17.10.2016].

⁶⁴ Analyzing the Nazi German laws and ordinances during the Holocaust, the death penalty was also implemented on the territory of nowadays Baltic states, former Yugoslavia and Ukraine.

⁶⁵ www.sprawiedliwi.dsh.waw.pl/program_wydarzen/, [access: 17.10.2016].

in Łódź also put the emphasis of the celebration on the activity of the Polish Underground, especially on people who worked for the Jewish Rescue Board “Żegota”⁶⁶.

The issue of commemorating the Righteous among the Nations is of a great importance in Poland. While the narration of over 6,000 Polish gentiles honored with the Yad Vashem medal for having saved Jews during World War II function as a positive pillar of memory in the context of the on-going debate about the dark side of Polish-Jewish relations under German occupation, the analyzed initiatives clearly show a multi-fold approach to the issue. Both projects concentrated on Poland and Polish Righteous as well as initiatives with a wider, human-rights based and future-oriented perspective were launched. Although March 6 was introduced as an official commemoration day just recently, it has become a fixed date in the memory calendar both of NGO's with a cultural and educational profile as well as governmental administration. For France and Germany, no significant initiatives and commemoration ceremonies could be identified at all.

c. European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism.

The European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism goes another step further and expands the subject of commemoration to millions of non-Jewish victims of the two largest totalitarian systems in the 20th century in Europe. Agreeing with A. Assmann, „an European historical memory, which evolves around human rights, lacks credibility, if it points at the lesser evil and subsequently entirely minimizes or represses East European memory.” She claims that by solely cultivating the victim status the east European countries will drift away from a common European identity and might become indifferent for other victims, which might cause danger for minorities such as Roma, who live in those countries⁶⁷. A possible solution for counteracting this scenario was the European Parliament resolution from 2 April, 2009 on European conscience and totalitarianism. In this resolution, the European Parliament condemns all crimes against humanity committed by authoritarian and totalitarian regimes and expresses their respect for the victims of those crimes. Furthermore, European integration is called a response for both Nazi and Soviet regime. A united Europe, according to the Parliament and in line with Assmann will never be possible without recognizing Nazism, fascism and Communism as a shared legacy. The EU resolution underlines “the importance of keeping the memories of the past alive, because there can be no reconciliation without remembrance”⁶⁸. In order to fulfil this duty it “calls for the establishment of a Platform of European Memory and Conscience”⁶⁹, which would provide support for networking and cooperation among national research institutes

⁶⁶ www.centrumdialogu.com/dzialalnosc-centrum-dialogu/1513-sprawiedliwi-2016-europejski-dzien-pamieci-o-sprawiedliwych, [access: 17.10.2016].

⁶⁷ A. Assmann, *Między historią a pamięcią*, p. 291. Own translation.

⁶⁸ European Parliament resolution on European conscience and totalitarianism, European Parliament website, www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+MOTION+P6-RC-2009-0165+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN, [access: 31.05.2015].

⁶⁹ The Platform was established in 2011 and till now brings together 48 public and private institutions and organizations from 18 countries. It serves for organizing conferences, public events and giving award to those who set a mark in resisting the totalitarian regimes in Europe. Website: www.memoryandconscience.eu/.

specializing in the subject of totalitarian history and for the creation of a pan-European documentation centre/memorial for the victims of all totalitarian regimes". Finally, the resolution calls for the commemoration of August 23 as a Europe-wide remembrance day for the victims of all totalitarian and authoritarian regimes with dignity⁷⁰.

The Resolution was followed by two other actions: a report of European Commission from December 2010 on "The memory of the crimes committed by totalitarian regimes in Europe" and the adoption of conclusions on the commemoration of victims of crimes committed by totalitarian regimes. The latter text encourages all EU member states develop a strategy of commemorating August 23 and was adopted by the members of the EU Justice and Home Affairs Council in Luxembourg on 10 June, 2011. In the next years, the official commemoration took part accordingly in Poland, Hungary and Lithuania⁷¹.

So far, it was not possible to identify any significant attempts to commemorate August 23 in Poland, France or Germany apart from the official, centrally organized ceremonies by EU bodies. Public awareness or press coverage do not exist either.

One exception is a newspaper article of the German Tagesspiegel from August 25, 2016, which comments on the lack of commemoration and lists the three bottom-up commemoration activities of local memorial sites that took place all over Germany⁷². According to the author, German society and politics are not eager to celebrate this day, as they are afraid to be accused of Holocaust relativization and the attempt to put Stalinist and national socialist crimes on the same level.⁷³ As public authorities officially put a huge emphasis on Holocaust commemoration, the assumption that Germany has a problem with a common remembrance days for both victims of Stalinist and national socialist crimes may be fully appropriate.

One reason for the complete lack of celebrations in Poland might be the lack of connection between the top-down chosen day (August 23) to an important event in both the collective memory in Poland and the awareness of Polish memory politic agents. In the last years, Poland has held commemoration ceremonies, accompanied by press coverage, regarding the anniversary of the Katyn massacre. In 2013, public attention was drawn to the Volhynia massacres⁷⁴, the year after to the 70th anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising on August 1st. Especially the latter date has become an important part of the Polish 'remembrance calendar'. The lacking "national memory" link to the newly implemented EU Remembrance Day could therefore be seen as a possible explanation for the lack of enthusiasm among potential agents of memory. As counterargument to this the newly elected Polish president

⁷⁰ European Parliament resolution on European conscience and totalitarianism, see above.

⁷¹ Commemorations of 23rd August - key dates, European Network Remembrance and Solidarity, enrs.eu/en/august23/866-commemorations-of-23-august-key-dates, [access: 31.05.2015].

⁷² Ein Gedenktage, der verschwiegen wird: www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/den-opfern-von-stalinismus-und-nationalsozialismus-ein-gedenktage-der-verschwiegen-wird/14450580.html, [access: 24.10.2016].

⁷³ *Op. cit.*

⁷⁴ The so-called Volhynia massacres were carried out mainly in summer 1943 by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army UPA against mostly Polish civilians from the Volhynia and Eastern Galicia regions and were part of an ethnic cleansing operation of the Bandera fraction of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN-B), who were fighting for an independent, monoethnic Ukrainian national state.

Andrzej Duda announced his first official visit abroad to be held in Tallinn on August 23, 2015, mentioning explicitly the occasion – the signing of the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact and the related European Day of Remembrance. In his speech, he even explicitly referred to the founding fathers of EU “who wanted an order of justice in Europe”.⁷⁵ The choice of the Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism for the first speech abroad could be read as a certain higher appreciation for this commemorating initiative on the part of the newly elected president.

Conclusions

The introduction of EU wide commemoration days connected to the Holocaust by EU bodies is an attempt to frame the collective memory of European society and to guide the development into a more unified, “Europeanized” direction. Therefore the analysis of the nature of these remembrance days and the ways in which they are celebrated in the individual EU member states (the public discourse) enables to draw conclusions about the image which the EU would like to present within the member states and towards the outside world. The sample of this article included remembrance days of the Holocaust (27 January), the Righteous (6 March) and all victims of the Stalinist and Nazi totalitarian regimes (23 August). The International Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January is celebrated since 2005 and although well noticed in society due to a large-scale press coverage, ceremonies and commemoration projects or events are to a large degree limited to the official level (top-down). In the public sphere, this commemoration day is strictly linked to the liberation of Auschwitz, this is why politicians, museum activists and the press especially in Poland and Germany – although from different perspectives are very active around that date. The places where those commemorations are held seems to be very important. In Germany it is a building of the Parliament which underlines that the commemoration is the matter of the state and is important for the whole nation. The decision to carry out the main commemoration ceremony at the Memorial de la Shoah in Paris as a major Holocaust education institution on the other hand underlines the educational aspect of that day in France. In Poland, there is no other place to commemorate the day of Holocaust remembrance than the former camp Auschwitz-Birkenau which also give the universal and symbolic dimension to this ceremony. However, focusing exclusively on Auschwitz might overshadow other places (not only the concentration and death camp but also former ghettos and places of mass murder) and therefore both scale and complexity of the whole phenomena. This could become a serious concern for collective memory, as time passes.

The commemoration days for the Righteous on March 6, which is celebrated in the EU since 2013, has been established to a significant degree only in Poland. Due to the popularity of the Polish Righteous in Polish society, this topic is both well received by the

⁷⁵ www.prezydent.pl/aktualnosci/wizyty-zagraniczne/art,1,w-niedziele-prezydent-duda-z-wizyta-w-tallinie,2.html#drukuj, [access: 17.10.2016].

population and a favorite subject of educational projects and exhibitions organized by different actors from NGO's and public administration bodies. Assumably, this 'enthusiasm' is linked with the commonly desired promotion of the bright side of Polish-Jewish relations during the Holocaust. The need for the propagation of a positive image of Poles between 1939-1945 arose in the last 15 years in the course of a series of public debates on cases of blackmailing, lack of support for Jews and even murder with antisemitic motivation (see the remarks about J.T. Gross' books earlier in this article).

At least in Poland however, the aim of the EU to commemorate all Righteous, who had the courage to stand up for the truth and struggle against evil in times of war and totalitarianism in the 20th century, is already on a good way to become good practice. A perfect example on how to combine the memory of the Holocaust and the heroic deed of the Righteous with the commemoration of other courageous people during other wars and genocides is the Garden of the Righteous in Warsaw. A completely different conclusion gives the attempt to analyze activities in France and Germany on March 6, which ended with almost no results. This is an example of how different top-down imposed commemoration days are turned (or not turned) into practice in member states.

The new commemoration day in honour of all victims of both major totalitarian systems in the 20th century is much less known than the other two initiatives. This could be attributed to its recent implementation on the one hand and to the overwhelming domination of the Holocaust in the memory landscape on collective trauma in Europe on the other. Due to its wide, inclusive scope, the initiative could assume a significant meaning for the creation of a common European memory frame and the ever-closer integration within the EU. The integration of both Eastern and Western European memory is crucial, as Claus Leggewie observed: "Only the common memory of both totalitarian systems, and therefore of both the crimes of the Nazi and Soviet regimes, is able to crush the existing national frames of memory."⁷⁶

The reception of the two totalitarian regimes of the 20th century is very diverse in the EU member states, and the focus on one of them as the main culprit of the national tragedies during World War II or in the decades following is especially different between the 'old' Western European member states and the 10 Central and Eastern European countries which joined the EU in 2004. Equal recognition, claims Carlos Closa, could be seen by some people as an act of neglecting or undervaluing the memory of the Holocaust⁷⁷. This warning points at the danger of excluding the Stalinist crimes from collective memory, which may be as dangerous for a common European set of values and joint commemoration practices, as a comparison of victimhood on the other hand.

Summing up: the most well-known off all three analyzed commemoration days is January 27 with the largest number of both top-down and bottom-up events and celebrations

⁷⁶ C. Leggewie, *Der Kampf um die europäische Erinnerung. Ein Schlachtfeld wird besichtigt*, München, 2001, p. 11.

⁷⁷ C. Closa, presentation entitled: *The Politics of EU Memory Policy Making*, International Workshop EU Politics of Memory, Florence, June 19-20, 2015.

in the analyzed countries. On the European Day of the Righteous, activities were noted in Poland only, but here very vividly and multi-faced. The European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism however so far seems to be not present in the minds of Poles, Germans and Frenchmen. In this point we agree with Leggewie: sometimes regulations by the official acts are not enough for certain commemoration to be fulfilled. If education and creation of awareness among the young generation is to be one of the main aims of all three EU Remembrance Days, popularization of knowledge about these dates and the encouragement of actors on different levels in the member states should be on the top of the priority list of the responsible decision-makers. The conclusion that it would be worthwhile, or even indispensable for the EU integration process to invest into the development of consolidated frames of memory within in the European Union, is sustained by Claus Leggewie:

A supranational model of Europa will only be able to obtain a durable political identity, if public debates and the mutual recognition of conflicting memories will have the same significance as treaties, the common markets and the open borders. Hence, this will be possible only, if united Europe will have a divided memory, which honestly names past conflicts and handles them (...). On this basis, a common feature will develop, which enables the European Union to function (...)⁷⁸.

Joint Holocaust and war victims' commemoration days all over the EU can, if they function vividly in the public sphere, help to develop a common sense of identity and, hopefully, also enable European society to develop awareness and sensibility for contemporary threats to peace, stability, prosperity and human rights. If liberal democracy and human rights are, as Polish philosophy professor Marcin Król claims, solely a "lucky coincidence" in history⁷⁹, issues of memory and education should be given a higher practical priority within the EU member states, than it is nowadays the case.

⁷⁸ Leggewie, *Der Kampf*, p. 7.

⁷⁹ In an interview in the Polish daily newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* from 7 February, 2014. See: wyborcza.pl/magazyn/1,136528,15414610,Bylismy_glupi.html, [access: 5.06.2015]. Król continues: "Maybe the legal prohibition of tortures is nothing more than a pleasant interlude in human history. However, it is not the culmination of the development process of humanity [...]."

Remembrance Days in European Union – between oblivion, national manifestations and an European narrative?

The tragic events of World War II play an important role in the collective memory of all European nations. Since 1945, many initiatives devoted to the coming-to-terms with the traumatic past have been launched. One of the challenges for actors involved in the creation of historical and educational policies is to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive. In the last years, a significant number of initiatives have been organized on the occasion of anniversaries.

The paper presents an analysis of 3 different initiatives connected to the official ceremonies of three international remembrance days in Poland, Germany and France. These are the Holocaust Remembrance Day, the International Holocaust Remembrance Day and the European Day of Remembrance for the Righteous. The selected countries represent different historical experiences of war and circumstances, in which the process of collective memory took place. The need for reconciliation between France and Germany was one of the basic reasons for European integration. The reconciliation process between Poland and Germany started much later and Poland joined EU just in 2004. These factors have had an important impact on the creation of the memory culture in those countries.

The paper gives an indication on who is involved in commemoration activities and which factors are decisive for the question of whether at all and how the selected anniversaries are celebrated in the three chosen countries. It shows, in how far national goals regarding historical policy are still prevailing and in which places and occasions a more universal and international narrative has been developed.